

## Higher National Unit Specification

### General information for centres

**Unit title:** Music First Study 1: Composition

**Unit code:** DJ20 34

**Unit purpose:** This unit is designed to provide the candidate with a knowledge and understanding of composing music. The unit is aimed at those who wish to pursue music creation as their principal study and who want to further develop their skills in a particular musical genre. A wide range of musical styles will be introduced and musical analysis undertaken as well as the study of general compositional techniques.

On completion of the Unit the candidate should be able to:

1. Display technical understanding and competence in a range of compositional techniques.
2. Show evidence of having undertaken thorough research in one genre of musical composition.
3. Compose music demonstrating creativity and appropriate technical proficiency in a musical genre.

**Credit points and level:** 3 HN Credits at SCQF level 7 (24 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7\*)

*\*SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

**Recommended prior knowledge and skills:** Some previous experience in musical composition/invention and the ability to communicate complex musical ideas using appropriate terminology and notation. These may be demonstrated by the achievement of Higher Music or equivalent (SCQF level 6). Candidates should also have good communication skills. These may be demonstrated by the achievement of core skill Communication at Higher level or by possession of Higher English and Communication or a suitable NQ Communication Unit (SCQF level 5/6).

**Core skills:** There may be opportunities to gather evidence towards core skills in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of core skills or core skills components.

**Context for delivery:** This is a mandatory Unit in the frameworks for HNC/D Music Group Awards. It is recommended that it is taught and assessed within the context of the particular group award to which it contributes.

## General information for centres (cont)

**Assessment:** The Unit will be assessed by three separate components:

- ◆ a workbook
- ◆ a research project
- ◆ a portfolio of compositions.

The workbook will consist of three selected pieces of work the candidate has undertaken throughout the period of study.

The project will cover the history and development of their chosen musical genre and include an analysis of a definitive work.

The portfolio will consist of three finished compositions, each in the form of audio recordings and an appropriate form of notation.

When assessing individual portfolios the following criteria should be used.

The portfolio should show compositional skills with regard to:

- ◆ style and concept
- ◆ pitch, rhythm, dynamics, articulation, timbre etc.
- ◆ good working knowledge of appropriate instrumentation/technology
- ◆ ability to shape and structure musical ideas
- ◆ accurate and appropriate musical notation

Candidates must achieve all of the minimum evidence specified for each Outcome, or combination of Outcomes in order to pass the Unit.

Candidates undertaking the group award may find opportunities to integrate assessments with:

<b>HN Unit</b>	<b>Unit Title</b>
	Songwriting 1
	Music Theory 1
	Music History 1

The portfolio component may contribute to the Graded Unit.

## **Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards**

**Unit title:** Music First Study 1: Composition

**Unit code:** DJ20 34

The sections of the Unit stating the Outcomes, knowledge and/or skills, and evidence requirements are mandatory.

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the knowledge and/or skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Candidates should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

### **Outcome 1**

Display technical understanding and competence in a range of compositional techniques.

#### **Knowledge and/or skills**

- ◆ Facility in the creative use and manipulation of musical materials
- ◆ Awareness of a variety of styles
- ◆ Awareness of a broad range of compositional techniques
- ◆ Notational skills
- ◆ Genre-specific compositional techniques

#### **Evidence requirements**

Candidates will need evidence in the form of a workbook to demonstrate their knowledge and/or skills by showing that they can:

- ◆ satisfactorily complete a minimum of three studies and/or exercises using appropriate techniques in a variety of styles which have been explored during the period of study as outlined in the Knowledge and/or skills above
- ◆ provide evidence of works-in-progress by submitting sketches.

The workbook would comprise a minimum of three items, be legible and well presented, its contents clearly listed and defined in order to potentially achieve a pass in the Outcome.

#### **Assessment guidelines**

Candidates undertaking the group award may combine this assessment with an outcome from 'Music Theory 1'. Assessment may be divided into component parts, or as a single submission towards the end of the period of study allowing the candidate time to refine their skills through practical work and technical exercises.

Should there be ambiguity regarding a candidate's response, oral questioning may be used to eliminate any doubt as to the candidate's understanding. The lecturer should note questions and responses.

## **Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards**

**Unit title:** Music First Study 1: Composition

### **Outcome 2**

Show evidence of having undertaken thorough research in one genre of musical composition.

#### **Knowledge and/or skills**

- ◆ Basic research skills
- ◆ Research history of the genre
- ◆ Research significant composers and works
- ◆ Analyse compositional techniques of the genre
- ◆ Written or oral presentation skills

#### **Evidence requirements**

Candidates will need evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and/or skills by showing that they can:

- ◆ analyse a definitive musical work from the chosen genre.
- ◆ present a dissertation, suggested 2500 words minimum, describing the history, musicological features and overall style of the genre, drawing attention to its leading composers and works.

#### **Assessment guidelines**

Candidates undertaking the group award may combine this assessment with an outcome from 'Music History 1' and/or 'Songwriting 1'.

Candidates may choose a wide range of presentation options but it is envisaged that they will use a combination of written, audio and visual support material to demonstrate their research.

Tutors may wish to present a completed pro forma which evaluates the accuracy, depth and presentation of the research.

Should there be ambiguity regarding a candidate's response, oral questioning may be used to eliminate any doubt as to the candidate's understanding. The lecturer should note questions and responses.

### **Outcome 3**

Compose music demonstrating creativity and appropriate technical proficiency in a musical genre.

#### **Knowledge and/or skills**

- ◆ facility in the creative use and manipulation of musical materials
- ◆ identification of key parameters within a musical genre
- ◆ use of suitable instrumentation for chosen idiom

## Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

### Unit title: Music First Study 1: Composition

- ◆ use of suitable melodic, rhythmic and harmonic language
- ◆ appropriate notational skills

### Evidence requirements

Candidates will need evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and/or skills by showing that they can produce a Portfolio consisting of three musical compositions in a chosen genre.

Each of the compositions should be represented by:

- ◆ an audio recording
- ◆ an appropriate form of musical notation.
- ◆ programme notes for their own submitted works. For each work candidates should analyse the structure, provide an account of the creative process and explain the choice of instrumentation.

The Portfolio would comprise of nine items. The contents should be legible and well-presented, clearly listed and defined in order to potentially achieve a pass in the Outcome.

The portfolio should show compositional skills with regard to:

- ◆ style and concept
- ◆ pitch, rhythm, dynamics, articulation, timbre etc.
- ◆ good working knowledge of appropriate instrumentation/technology
- ◆ ability to shape and structure musical ideas
- ◆ accurate and appropriate musical notation

The candidate's work should display some understanding of the compositional techniques and stylistic matters relating to their selected musical genre and demonstrate an ability to create music utilising these applied skills.

### Assessment guidelines

Candidates undertaking the group award may combine this assessment with an Outcome from Songwriting 1.

Assessment may be divided into component parts, or as a single submission towards the end of the period of study allowing the candidate time to refine their skills through practical work and technical exercise.

Should there be ambiguity regarding a candidate's response, oral questioning may be used to eliminate any doubt as to the candidate's understanding. The lecturer should note questions and responses.

Tutors may wish to present a completed pro-forma which evaluates the creative achievement and technical success of the candidate's work.

## **Administrative Information**

<b>Unit code:</b>	DJ20 34
<b>Unit title:</b>	Music First Study 1: Composition
<b>Superclass category:</b>	LF
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## **Higher National Unit specification: support notes**

### **Unit title:** Music First Study 1: Composition

This part of the Unit specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

### **Guidance on the content and context for this Unit**

The Unit is aimed primarily at candidates who already have some compositional experience. The overall concept is that, by focusing on areas of personal interest, a candidate will achieve greater skill levels in their chosen genre. Also, through broader study, the candidates will expand their knowledge of and proficiency in general music creation techniques. The Unit should be thought of as specialist, befitting a first-study composer, rather than a generalised rudiments course. However, the candidate should be familiar with rudiments on completion of the Unit.

The area of composition is increasingly specialist and this Unit is not designed to cover in depth all of the widely differing techniques and knowledge required to succeed in all areas of contemporary music composition. However, there are certain aspects which are essential:

- ◆ Musical Imagination
- ◆ Understanding of musical elements – pitch, rhythm, dynamics, articulation, timbre etc.
- ◆ Knowledge of instrumentation
- ◆ Ability to shape and structure musical ideas
- ◆ Ability to express, convey or notate musical thoughts
- ◆ Organisational skills, focus, self-motivation.

### **Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit**

The Unit is intended to enable the candidate to be assessed in an area of music which is of primary interest to them. Familiarity with the genre on the part of the assessor is therefore of some importance, although thorough expertise need not be required at this level.

For candidates undertaking this Unit as part of a group award the Portfolio may contribute to the Graded Unit.

## **Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)**

### **Unit title:** Music First Study 1: Composition

The portfolio should show excellent compositional skills with regard to:

- ◆ style and concept
- ◆ pitch, rhythm, dynamics, articulation, timbre etc.
- ◆ good working knowledge of appropriate instrumentation/technology
- ◆ ability to shape and structure musical ideas
- ◆ accurate and appropriate musical notation

### **Outcome 1**

The purpose of the first part of this Outcome is to equip the candidate with compositional techniques and skills which may be considered fundamental to a first-study composer, irrespective of whether these are applicable or not to their own particular genre. It is important that the candidate has a well-rounded technique by the end of the period of study. The tutor should therefore perceive what skills the candidate must acquire to achieve this and direct the technical study to these ends.

The candidate will select examples of their work to be submitted for assessment. The candidate must present a minimum of three completed pieces of work comprising a mixture of course-work studies, technical exercises, sketches and works-in-progress. These may be in a variety of written and audio formats and should show to best effect the depth and range of the candidate's technical capabilities. In general, the quality rather than the quantity of submitted work is of the essence.

The sketches and works-in-progress are submitted to allow the candidate an opportunity to display further work undertaken throughout the period of study which they feel would provide a valuable insight into the breadth and scope of their compositional abilities.

### **Outcome 2**

This is a research project in two parts:

Part 1: Analysis of a definitive work.

It is essential that the candidate shows understanding of the structure of the analysed work. This document may include music notation and/or a graph with text, its success being judged in relation to both the perceptiveness and accuracy of the candidate's observations. The analysis should convey how the work functions in terms of the constituent musical parameters (e.g. melodic construction, harmony, rhythm, lyric construction, timbre, instrumentation, etc.) and show these conclusions in a clear, well-presented manner.



## **Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)**

### **Unit title:** Music First Study 1: Composition

#### **Part 2: Dissertation.**

The description of the history, aesthetics, musicological features and overall style of the genre should draw attention to the leading composers and works in this field. It should compare and contrast these with the analysed definitive work using appropriate musical terminology. The candidate should assess the cultural significance of the genre, looking at its musical and wider artistic influences.

### **Outcome 3**

For candidates undertaking the group award Outcome 3 may contribute to the Graded Unit. It is fundamental that the aesthetic values and key technical elements of the genre are represented in the candidate's work. This may be judged in the form of an assessment document which might contain references to the musical parameters and stylistic elements important to the genre. Special consideration should be given to innovative work.

The recording of one work should be compatible in quality with industry definition of a master recording. The recording of the other two works should be of a sufficiently high quality to accurately represent both the candidate's intentions and current best practice in the genre. An assessment instrument or pro-forma would be of use in evaluating the technical quality of submitted audio.

The scores submitted should be clear and legible and should utilise the notational conventions appropriate to both the employed instrumentation and musical genre. For example, a lead-sheet would not be acceptable for a string quartet; guitar TAB would not be appropriate for keyboard. Where the genre is, say, that of 'singer/songwriter' a lead-sheet consisting of properly notated vocal part with lyric and accompanying chord chart, perhaps with TAB, would be sufficient. The keyword for the notation is 'appropriate'.

For the programme notes the candidate should present an informative account for each work, as individual case-studies. However, it may be useful to examine them collectively where the candidate wishes to describe a common goal or artistic endeavour throughout their work.

The works should be discussed in juxtaposition with how the candidate perceives them in the genre; e.g. which aspects may be considered representative and which may be drawn from outside influences. It is important that the candidate is able to show that they are aware of their own artistic reasoning, in terms of how their own work fits in to the genre and the wider musical picture. The candidate's programme notes should provide insight into the works with, for example, analytical synopses of their formal structures, choices and usage of instrumentation, the process of creation/inspiration.

### **Open learning**

This unit could be delivered by open learning. However, it would require planning by the centre to ensure the sufficiency and authenticity of candidate evidence.

For information for normal open learning arrangements, please refer to the SQA guide *Assessment and Quality Assurance of Open and Distance Learning* (SQA, 2000).

## **Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)**

**Unit title:** Music First Study 1: Composition

### **Candidates with additional support needs**

This Unit specification is intended to ensure that there are no artificial barriers to learning or assessment. The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments or considering alternative Outcomes for Units. For information on these, please refer to the SQA document *Guidance on Special Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Additional Support Needs* (BA 2399, SQA, due 2004).

## General information for candidates

### Unit title: Music First Study 1: Composition

This Unit is designed to enable you to:

- ◆ increase your compositional skills and knowledge-base in your chosen genre of music
- ◆ increase your broader technical understanding and proficiency as a composer.

In addition this is the progression route to Music First Study 2: Composition.

You will be asked to:

- ◆ compile a workbook containing studies, technical exercises in a variety of styles, sketches and works-in-progress.
- ◆ undertake a research project on the genre of music in which you are working. This must analyse a definitive musical work and describe the history, style, leading composers and works of the genre.
- ◆ create a portfolio of 3 compositions in your own genre of music. This will be made up of recorded audio and appropriately notated versions of each work accompanied by detailed programme notes.

You will receive tuition in appropriate compositional studies and research skills enabling you to undertake the above tasks. You should also receive support and guidance in your development as a composer, helping you towards realising your creative potential. A large amount of self-study and independent work is expected.

Your portfolio should show excellent compositional skills with regard to:

- ◆ style and concept
- ◆ pitch, rhythm, dynamics, articulation, timbre etc.
- ◆ good working knowledge of appropriate instrumentation/technology
- ◆ ability to shape and structure musical ideas
- ◆ accurate and appropriate musical notation